DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 946 CG 031 852

TITLE	RETROspective: A Parent's Guide to Youth Culture. Building Bridges between Generations.
INSTITUTION	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS/PHS), Rockville, MD. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.
REPORT NO	DHHS-SMA-01-3417
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	31p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345. Tel: 800-729-6686 (Toll Free). For full text: http://www.health.org.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Attitudes; Adolescent Behavior; *Adolescents; *Cultural Context; *Drug Use; Generation Gap; Mass Media Role; *North American Culture; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Materials
IDENTIFIERS	*Media Literacy; *Youth Culture

ABSTRACT

Recognizing expressions of youth culture is a major step toward understanding teens. This understanding can help parents keep lines of communication open between them and their teens. Making it clear that you do not want your child to use alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs is a proven factor in reducing youth drug use. RETROspective is designed to immerse the reader in expressions of youth culture by presenting a guided tour through American youth culture from the 1950s to the present. In addition to illustrating expressions of the culture, RETROspective explains what youth culture is and how it is reflected everywhere, its influence on youth's attitudes and behaviors, the role of media and music in the culture, and the importance of media literacy in a media driven society. Lastly, RETROspective includes "Building Bridges," a feature that offers suggestions for starting conversations with youth about various topics, including alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, and media influences. (GCP)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 465 940

RETROspective
A Parent's Guide to Youth Culture:
Building Bridges between Generations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG031852

retro

a parent's guide to

youth culture

Inside

Youth culture—what's it all about?
page 2

Millennials, Xers, and Boomers—teens through the decades.
page 4

Sex, Drugs, and Rock n' Roll.
page 5

"Apple Jacks" and "Special K"—not just cereals anymore.
page 8

You call that music?
page 12

Tuning in instead of tuning out.
page 16

Media literacy—reading between the lines.
page 18

Building Bridges Between Generations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

BEST COPY

Understanding Youth Culture

An Introduction to *RETROspective*

"It's 10 o'clock. Do you know where your child is?" This popular slogan was designed to encourage parents to get involved in their children's lives. Now that we've entered a new millennium, a more appropriate question could be, "It's the 21st century. Do you know what's influencing your child?"

Recognizing expressions of youth culture is a major step toward understanding your teen. This understanding can help you keep lines of communication open between you and your teen. Making it clear that you do not want your child to use alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs is a proven factor in reducing youth drug use. ***RETROspective*** is designed to immerse you in expressions of youth culture by giving you a guided tour through American youth culture from the 1950s to the present. In addition to illustrating expressions of the culture, ***RETROspective*** **explains what youth culture is and how it is reflected everywhere,** its influence on youth's attitudes and behaviors, the role of media and music in the culture, and the importance of media literacy in a media-driven society. Lastly, ***RETROspective*** includes "Building Bridges," a feature that offers suggestions for starting conversations with youth about various topics, including alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, and media influences.

Being a parent is one of the most challenging jobs there is. Parents must feel confident and comfortable talking to their teens, whether it is about sex, drugs, or other important issues. The choices teens make and the values they adopt can determine whether they become happy, productive adults. Ironically, the older a teen becomes, the less likely it is that parents will talk to him about these topics. Sometimes parents may feel intimidated or unsure of their roles as their teens grow more independent and subscribe to a youth culture that may be unfamiliar to adults. However, teens still want and need their parents' support and guidance during this pivotal period. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 1999 National Household Survey of Drug Abuse, almost 11 percent of youth ages 12 to 17 currently use illicit drugs. New drugs like ecstasy, ketamine, and Rohypnol—commonly known as "club drugs"—are always emerging, and parents need to stay informed. It is important for parents and caregivers to continue to discuss alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs with their children early and often.

By revisiting the popular culture of the past and providing a glimpse into the world your teen lives in today, ***RETROspective*** can help you start a meaningful conversation with your teen, and help you maintain the open, two-way communication that is essential in building strong family connections.

Cultural Expressions

When we witness our adolescents' "strange" clothing and behavior (such as tattooing and piercing), and hear "meaningless" and provocative (to us) language and song lyrics, we may hope that they are just passing fads. However, what we are actually seeing and hearing are the expressions of youth culture.

Cultural expressions are constantly changing, and attempts to describe them are usually dated before the ink dries. The following examples in no way represent a comprehensive list, but we present them to give adults a "snapshot" of some of today's cultural expressions of youth.

Expressions of Youth Culture

Clothes Expensive is "in," but the range is vast—from tattered to neatly pressed, from soiled to starched white. Included are baggy pants, flannel shirts, ripped jeans, athletic shoes, combat boots, bell-bottoms, designer labels, T-shirts with slogans, and exposed underwear. Sometimes clothes reflect a specific interest or life philosophy, such as the Goth look of chains, black clothes, nail polish, and lipstick for males and females.

Body Decorations These include earrings for males, as well as tattoos, multiple ear piercings, and other body piercings accommodating varying types and sizes of jewelry for both sexes.

Hairstyles These include spiked, shaved, brightly and unusually colored, dreadlocks, and extensions.

Music Rap is a combination of words, rhythms, and musical riffs that began among urban black and Latino teens over two decades ago. Some of its messages relate to hip-hop, a prominent facet of today's youth culture. Rap and hip-hop are popular across geographic and racial boundaries and are even used to advertise consumer goods to adult, suburban dwellers. Heavy metal began in the psychedelic 1960s and is characterized by amplification, electronic energy, and a hard beat. Electronica music includes techno, jungle, trip-hop, and electro. Followers of ska (sometimes called the grandfather of reggae) enjoy its jazz-influenced rhythms.

Music Technology Computer-based MP3s, CDs, minidiscs.

Dancing Baby Boomers may recall astonishing their parents by dancing without touching their partners; now, not even a partner is required. Raves, all-night dances held in large venues like warehouses, include a DJ who mixes and synthesizes rapid-beat music. This has been described by one (positive) critic as "spasms of noise that sound like assault-weapons fire punctuated by the booms of collapsing buildings."

Movies Horror, slasher, disaster, action adventure, teen heroes and heroines. DVD technology.

Games and Game Technology Arcade, video, and computer games. Children who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s had a very different game experience than their parents, who may remember Pac-Man. Today's games range from complex versions of benign games like baseball to violent (and often complex) fantasy games and adventures.

Sports Pro wrestling, basketball, skateboarding, inline skating, BMX biking, surfing, mountainboarding, snowboarding, wakeboarding, street-luge, and snowskating. Some youth engage in "extreme" sports, that is, sports that take participants to the farthest, most extreme edge of danger.

Technology—Computers The availability and use of computers exploded in the 1990s. Computers have become the learning tools, game boards, and entertainment centers for many youth.

Technology—Internet Bursting onto the scene in the 1990s with rapid, colorful images both positive and negative, the Internet may represent the most significant cultural divide between Baby Boomers and subsequent generations. Teens keep in constant contact through e-mail and instant messaging.

Take a trip down memory lane with the *RETRO* timeline. Do you remember the impact these events had on you or your environment? Ask your teen what she thinks of the more recent events.

1954—Supreme Court rules on Brown v. Board of Education, banning segregation in public schools.

December 1955—Rosa Parks is arrested after not giving up her seat to a white person on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.

1956—Elvis Presley appears on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, but is only shown from the waist up due to his seductive dance moves.

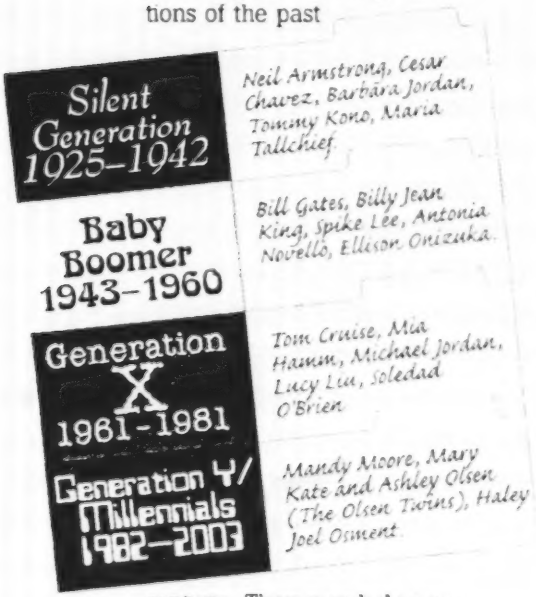
1956—*Howl*, by Allen Ginsberg, is seized by the police, but courts later decide that it is not obscene and release the book. The controversy creates widespread publicity for the Beat movement.

May 4, 1957—Alan Freed hosts the first prime-time television special featuring rock and roll music.

July 12, 1957—The U.S. Surgeon General reports a direct relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. But 60 percent of males and 30 percent of females keep right on puffing.

Teens Through the Decades

For parents of teens, the generation gap often feels more like the Grand Canyon. Although young people through the ages have faced similar challenges, each generation has unique experiences that helped shape their values, attitudes, and behaviors. The following definitions are a general guide to the generations of the past


Silent Generation 1925–1942
Neil Armstrong, Cesar Chavez, Barbara Jordan, Tommy Kono, Maria Tallchief
Baby Boomer 1943–1960
Bill Gates, Billy Jean King, Spike Lee, Antonia Novello, Ellison Onizuka
Generation X 1961–1981
Tom Cruise, Mia Hamm, Michael Jordan, Lucy Liu, Soledad O'Brien
Generation Y/ Millennials 1982–2003
Mandy Moore, Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen (The Olsen Twins), Haley Joel Osment

century. They may help you discover the similarities and understand the differences between your youthful experiences and those of your children.

The Silent Generation
This generation grew up with the harsh realities of war and a depressed economy. As they came of age, they were too young to be war heroes and too old to be youthful free spirits. They paved the way for civil rights and rock and roll.

Baby Boom Generation
This generation grew up with the most idyllic images of American family life (*Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*) but ushered in a "counter-culture" era of free love, urban riots, and campus unrest. As they matured, idealism made way for materialism, and the word "yuppie" was coined.

Generation X
Generation X grew up fast with rampant rates of divorce, a rise in single parent families, the AIDS epidemic, skyrocketing youth crime, and unsupervised afternoons. They entered the job market when there were no jobs, so it's not surprising they are risk takers with their careers and prefer free agency to corporate loyalty. Their outsider status helped spawn the angst-filled grunge movement and they also fueled the hip-hop explosion.

Generation Y/Millennials
Those born into Generation Y never had it so good and bad at the same time. Child welfare is back at the top of the national agenda, from vaccinations to better childcare. But at the same time, school violence has taken center stage and drugs are more accessible, cheaper, and more potent. Today's teens are growing up during economically prosperous times, decreasing divorce rates, and medical advances, but they also face the pressures of the fast-paced technological age.

Much of this information came from the book *The Fourth Turning*, by Neil Strauss and William Howe.

Building Bridges

Remember, youth culture is real and can be defined. Understanding youth culture throughout the decades can help parents and other adults talk with today's teens.

Exercise 1: Rent it Today!

Go to the local video store with your teen and rent two movies—one that you pick which depicts what life was like when you were a teenager and one that your teenager feels accurately depicts his/her experience. Watch them together and talk about the positive and/or negative ways young people are portrayed.

Exercise 2: Try This on for Size.

Play dress up! Go into each other's closets and choose something that you would actually wear in public. Was this difficult? Why did you choose a certain article of clothing or accessory? What made other clothing choices seem unacceptable or undesirable?

The More Things Change...

The 1960s and 1970s were times of rebellion in the streets of America and on the battlefields of Southeast Asia. In 1963, The March on Washington brought 250,000 people to Washington, DC, in a massive demonstration for civil rights. Six years later, in 1969, the Woodstock Music Festival lured thousands of people to a farm in upstate New York.

That same year, 3 days of rioting outside the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village bar, gave birth to the lesbian/gay rights movement. Cesar Chavez emerged as a leader of the farm workers union and Chicano rights by spearheading a 5-year national grape boycott, which ended in 1970 when growers finally signed a contract with workers in the field. Women launched a revitalized movement for equality in the 1960s, taking up the battle for an Equal Rights Amendment that suffragettes abandoned nearly a half-century earlier. The American Indian Movement laid siege to the village of Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1973, demanding the return of captured Indian lands. In the Pacific, the "Hawaiian renaissance" ushered in a renewed cultural and political awakening as young artists expressed themselves in their native tongue—a language which had been suppressed since Hawaii's annexation to the United States in 1900.

By the early 1970s, the wave of change and diversity had reached Hollywood. Actor Bruce Lee popularized the Chinese martial art of Kung Fu in hit movies before his sudden

Bruce Lee

and untimely death at age 33 while filming *Enter the Dragon*. *Shaft* and *Superfly* paved the way for an era of black action films, with incredibly popular sound tracks. In 1977, more than 80 million people were tuned in to *Roots*, the Alex Haley miniseries that told a compelling story of African American history in personal terms.

The topic of drug use gained greater media exposure in the 1960s and 1970s. Marijuana use peaked in 1979. Hallucinogens were promoted as a way to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

1958—Wham-O Manufacturing introduces the Frisbee® and the Hula-Hoop.

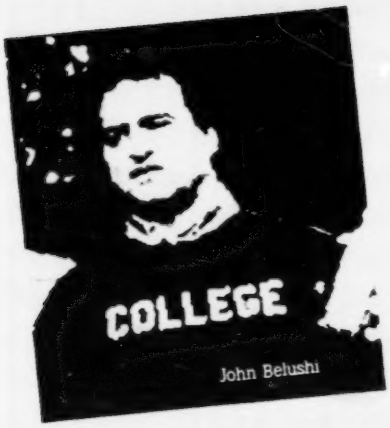
May 31, 1959—Troubled jazz great Billie Holiday, who was in a coma, dies from complications of cirrhosis of the liver and cardiac failure after a long history of heroin and alcohol addiction.

October 17, 1960—Former star contestant on the TV quiz show *Twenty-One*, Charles Van Doren is arrested on charges of perjury. He and 13 other people told a grand jury they had not received answers to questions before going on air, when in fact, they had. The popular 1990s film *Quiz Show* was based on this true story.

1960—Birth control pills are approved for marketing in the United States.

1961—Puerto Rican actress Rita Moreno (in a role created on stage by Chita Rivera, another acclaimed Puerto Rican performer), dances her way to an Academy Award in the film version of *West Side Story*.

August 5, 1962—Marilyn Monroe dies at 36 of a massive overdose of prescription drugs. The coroner's report, and later official investigations, calls her death a "probable suicide."



Jimi Hendrix

Beatles songs like *Yellow Submarine*, *Strawberry Fields Forever*, and *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* (the initials spelled LSD) were interpreted by fans as celebrations of psychedelic drug experiences. Messages celebrating drug use were common while factual information on the consequences was scarce. Head shops operated openly in most cities, selling drug paraphernalia, psychedelic fashions, and black light posters.

Then, as the 1970s turned into the 1980s, pop culture changed dramatically as the legacy of drug use became clearer. The list of performers who died of drug-related causes kept growing. Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, two performers who talked openly about escapism through drugs, died of highly publicized heroin overdoses. Jim Morrison of The Doors, another vocal promoter of drugs, died from suspected drug use. Freddie Prinze, a young Puerto Rican comic who broke barriers with his show *Chico and the Man*, committed suicide in 1977, ending a life tormented by alcohol and drug abuse.

Rick James hit the charts with pro-drug songs like *Give It to Me, Baby* and *Mary Jane*, then lost it all to cocaine addiction. Comic Richard Pryor nearly died after setting himself on fire while freebasing cocaine. Irreverent comic John Belushi, known for his work on *Saturday Night Live* and as one of the Blues Brothers of movie fame, died in 1982 after shooting a speed ball of cocaine and heroin.

The emergence of HIV/AIDS as a killer virus in the early 1980s and its links to sex and drugs became a serious concern. In fact, by 1986, a Gallup poll found that drugs were considered the number one problem in schools.

This was the environment in which the parents and grandparents of today experienced their own youth culture.

The More They Stay the Same

A lot has changed across the generations. Generation Y has grown up surrounded by computerization and technology—from automatic teller machines to digital clocks. Radios and compact disc players are the size of earphones. Even sneakers are high tech.

For today's teens, e-mail is as common as the telephone, and Web surfing is a favorite after-school activity. Their environment is more multicultural than that of their parents and grandparents, and images of sex and violence continue to surround them on a daily basis. To some youth, the Vietnam war and the assassinations of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are ancient history. But they do know about Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; the attacks at the Oklahoma City Federal Building, the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon; the suicide of Kurt Cobain; and the murders of teenagers by fellow students at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Youth culture is reflected everywhere.
There are positive and negative aspects to youth culture. Some of the most positive youth values include:

nd John F. Kennedy

Self-idealism/Optimism—Most youth believe they are special and can accomplish whatever they desire.

Activism—Teens often play an active role in such issues as environmentalism and social responsibility. Teens are interested in working on a personal level to improve society.

Morality/Sprituality—Today's teens tend to speak about the importance of spirituality and religion. According to one study, 50 percent of teens surveyed said religion plays an important part in their lives.

Authenticity—Honesty is important to teens. They often perceive that the most authentic voices belong to those who have "been there and done

1963—*The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan is published, laying the groundwork for the second wave of feminism in the 1970s.

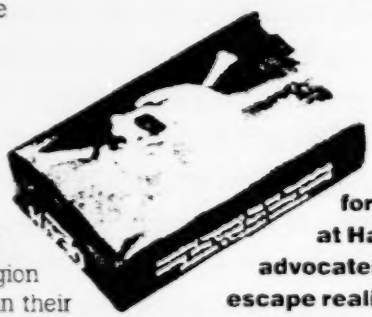
August 1963—Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech to over 250,000 people during the Civil Rights March on Washington.

November 22, 1963—President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

1964—The Civil Rights Act passes, prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, or religion.

1964—Patsy Mink (D-HI) is the first Asian American woman elected to the U.S. Congress.

1965—Congress passes the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act requiring the Surgeon General's warning on cigarette packs.



1966—Dr. Timothy Leary, a former psychologist at Harvard University, advocates LSD as a way to escape reality. He later went to jail, escaped, and fled to Algeria.

SLANG

Amphetamines
Beans, Bennies, Black Mollies, Crystal, Ice, Star, Speed, Uppers, West Coast Turnarounds.

Cocaine
Beam, Blanca, Blast, Blizzard, Cecil, Foo Foo, Nose Candy, Powder, Snort, Snow.

Crack Cocaine
Apple Jacks, B.J.s, Baby T, Baseball, Cloud, Dip, Glow, Hardline, Paste.

Ecstasy/MDMA
(methylenedioxymethamphetamine)
Adam, E, Eve, Herbal Bliss, Love Drug, Rib, Shabu, Wafers, X.

GHB
(Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate)
Battery Acid, Date Rape Drug, Fantasy, Liquid G, Liquid X, Salty Water, Scoop, Soap, Zonked.

Heroin
Aries, Big H, Black Tar, Crank, Dirt, Dust, Harry, Horsebite, Junk.

Inhalants
Amy, Bolt, Boppers, Climax, Hardware, Nitrates, Ozone, Poppers, Snappers, Whippets.

Ketamine
Bump, Green, Jet Fuel, Honey Oil, K-Hole, Kay Jay, Purple, Special K, Super C.

LSD
(Lysergic acid diethylamide)
Acid, Barrels, Blotter, Cheers, Frogs, Mind Blow, Moons, Paper, Tabs.

Marijuana
Ace, Blunt, Chronic, Ganja, Grass, Herb, Mary Jane, Red Bud, Spliff, Whackyweed, Yerba.

To see what these and other drugs look like, log on to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's Web site at http://www.drugfreeamerica.org/druginfo/default.asp.

that" and who have shared experiences similar to their own.

Self-Reliance—Many of today's teens have been raised to be self-reliant and to believe in their own abilities.

These positive youth values are good news for parents. Yet, parents still have to contend with potentially harmful aspects of youth culture. Even parents who know their teen's friends and carefully screen everything that their teen watches on television and every compact disc and video game that their teen plays cannot keep ALL negative messages at bay.

Much of youth culture is brimming with symbols. Some of those symbols may be relatively harmless—like peace signs and logos of expensive clothes and cars. Other symbols openly promote to youth the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, like marijuana leaves or malt liquor logos on caps and T-shirts.

But obvious pro-drug messages aren't the only problem. There are more subtle messages that glamorize substance use and abuse in youth culture. Popular actors and actresses travel back and forth from drug rehabilitation programs to jail, then return to star in hit movies or make chart-topping recordings without any visible loss of income or popularity. The same is true for many professional athletes, who are admired and emulated by youth. Given all this, it's easy to see why some young people may not fully understand the risks or consequences of using alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

Youth perception of harm associated with drug use decreased in the 1990s, and youth marijuana use doubled during the decade.

That is why it is important for parents to stay informed, keep the lines of communication open, and give their teens clear no-use messages. The 1990s saw a boom in the use of "designer drugs"—modified versions of illegal drugs that were first produced in the 1960s by underground chemists. They were made illegal in the 1980s, but their use has now become associated with "raves,"—all-night dance parties usually held in old warehouses and abandoned buildings. Designer drugs like ecstasy, GHB, and special K (see slang terms) are often more potent than the original substance they mimic. Even a single dose can cause major brain damage and even death.

Ecstasy facts

- Ecstasy is taken orally, usually in a tablet or a capsule. Its effects last approximately 3 to 6 hours, though confusion, depression, sleep problems, anxiety, and paranoia may occur weeks after it is taken. Ecstasy damages neurons in the brain, affecting memory and thought.
- Ecstasy's stimulant effects, which enable users to dance for extended periods, may lead to dehydration, hypertension, heart or kidney failure, and a marked increase in body temperature. It may also lead to heart attacks, strokes, and seizures.
- An additional danger of ecstasy use lies in the fact that drug dealers may substitute other, even more dangerous compounds, sometimes with fatal results.
- The *Monitoring the Future Survey* (MTF) showed a doubling from 1991 to 1997 of the 12th graders who thought it would be "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get ecstasy if they wanted some.
- The 2000 MTF suggests that ecstasy is used by more American teenagers today than is cocaine.

1967—Elizabeth Taylor wins an Academy Award opposite Richard Burton in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Her performance is one of the reasons a new movie code, "suggested for mature audiences," is put into use.

1968—Shirley Chisholm (D-NY) is the first black woman elected to the U.S. Congress.

April 4, 1968—Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated.

June 5, 1968—Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated.

November 1, 1968—After 3½ years, Operation Rolling Thunder in Vietnam comes to an end. More than 800 pilots are dead or missing, and hundreds more are in captivity.

What's Hot in 1968—Nehru Jackets, wide ties, and Levi's for girls are introduced. Tiny Tim sings *Tiptoe Through the Tulips*. Peggy Flemming wins an Olympic gold medal in figure skating.

June 1969—The Stonewall uprising occurs, in which gays fight police harassment at New York City's Stonewall Inn, giving birth to the gay rights movement.

July 1969—Neil Armstrong walks on the moon.

August 15–17, 1969—The Woodstock music festival draws more than 200,000 people.

Building

Bridges

Remember, there are similarities and differences across the generations. Explore them with your teen.

Exercise 3: Say What?

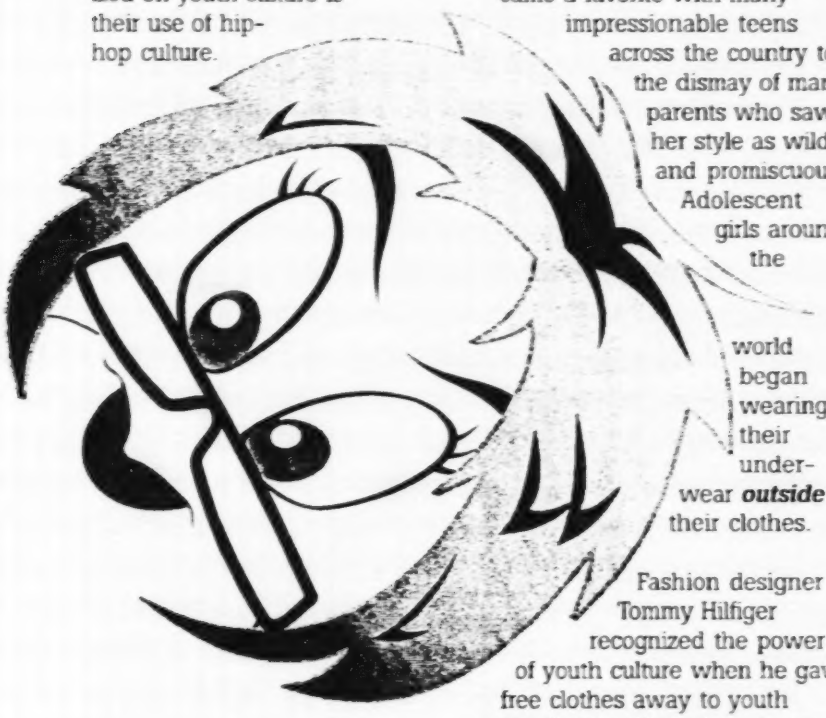
Divide a stack of blank index cards between you and your teen and write down different slang terms for drugs, one on each card. You use the terms from your teenage years and your teen should use the ones that he hears today. Quiz each other and see how familiar you are with each other's slang terms. Have any of the terms stayed the same? If not, why have they changed? Have drugs (their potency, consumption pattern, popularity) changed?

Exercise 4: Fill in the Decade.

Get four blank pieces of paper and write down the decade that describes your teenage years at the top of two (e.g., 1960s) and do the same for your teenager (e.g., 1990s) on the other two pages. Each of you takes a set of the papers and writes down what you know about the decade and the youth culture of that time. After you both finish, either switch papers or read your thoughts aloud. Discuss the similarities and differences in your impressions.

The Power of Youth Culture

Today's teen consumer market is the most lucrative it has ever been. Marketers recognize this fact and often use elements of youth culture to promote their products. Perhaps one of the best examples of how marketers have capitalized on youth culture is their use of hip-hop culture.



According to the Associated Press, hip-hop fashion alone generates $750 million to $1 billion annually. Sales of rap music and videos exceed that amount, and about two-thirds of all rap purchases are made by whites.

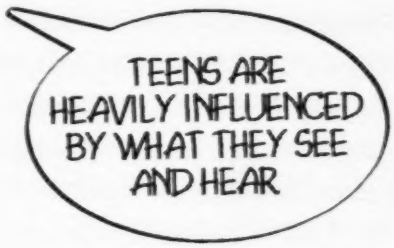
Rap's rise and sustained global popularity is a good illustration of how influential youth culture is on youth attitudes and behavior.

Remember when Madonna hit the charts with her bra in full view while singing about "virginity"? She quickly became a favorite with many impressionable teens across the country to the dismay of many parents who saw her style as wild and promiscuous. Adolescent girls around the world began wearing their underwear ***outside*** their clothes.

Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger recognized the power of youth culture when he gave free clothes away to youth trendsetters like urban rappers in the early 1990s. Hilfiger marketed his brand by giving clothes to MTV and VH-1 personalities and featuring the teen stars of the 1999 movie *The Faculty* in his print ads. Picking up on teens' interest in computer games, Hilfiger sponsored a Nintendo competition and installed Nintendo terminals in his stores. The payoff? Teens rated Hilfiger jeans as their number one brand in an American Express Company survey in 2000.

The fact is, even though 65 percent of teens claim that they rely on themselves for their fashion ideas, less than 20 percent of the teen population is innovative enough to drive fashion trends, according to research from Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), an Illinois-based marketing firm.

The intensification of media effects like virtual reality has been coupled with a thirst for



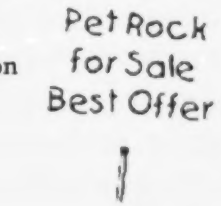
heightened sensory experience and risk-taking in youth culture. Youth today enjoy the adrenaline rush of "extreme" sports like snowboarding and skateboarding. Young people slam their bodies into each other in "mosh pits" or dive off stages at rock concerts, resulting in injuries and even death. This thrill-seeking mentality provides the context for drug use either as a "high" beyond normal experience or an instant solution to discomfort within a "now" oriented society. The glamorization of drugs in "heroin chic" fashions promotes

illegal drug use the same way youth-targeted packaging sells the idea of alcohol and cigarettes to children.

"Generations before had war stories. We have moshing stories." Teenage boy interviewed for the ABC Television show *20/20*.

As adults, we often forget what it was like to be an impressionable teenager. We sigh about the excesses of today's young people and don't think about the oddities and influences in our own past. Remember "Beatlemania," pet rocks, psychedelic paintings, bell-bottoms, Dr. Strangelove, and hit songs like Curtis Mayfield's *I'm Your Pusher Man*, or Eric Clapton's *Cocaine*? We need to recognize the power of youth culture to influence attitudes and behaviors.

If we're honest, we'd admit that our idols, youthful styles of dress, music, attitudes, and behavior often drove our parents crazy, too. It's called the **"Generation Gap."**



Building Bridges

Remember, youth culture influences youth attitudes and behaviors.

Exercise 5: You Think THAT is Cool?

Do you ever think back to your high school days and cringe when you remember how you dressed or what you used to do for fun? Or maybe you still like to do the same things and laugh at how little things have changed. But, what does your teenager think? Ask your teen what she thinks is cool and likes to do for fun. Then share what you thought was cool and what your interests were when you were a teen. Why were/are these things cool? Is it because everybody else was/is doing it? Are your interests similar? How have your interests changed over the years? Has your teen's interests changed since he was younger?

Exercise 6: www.FIND YOUR IDOL.com

If you have access to a computer and the Internet, sit down with your teen and do a little surfing together. Each of you look up a person you admire(d) as a teenager and see what interesting things you can find out. Are your idols anything alike or totally different? What is it about these people that you and your teen admire? Did they or do they have any influence on your attitudes or behavior?

September 18, 1970—James Marshall "Jimi" Hendrix dies at 27 from a drug overdose.

October 4, 1970—Janis Joplin dies at 27 from a drug overdose.

1971—The United States lowers the voting age to 18 with the passage of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution.

January 1, 1971—Cigarette advertisers impose a voluntary ban on radio and television advertising.

July 3, 1971—Jim Morrison, lead singer for The Doors, dies of a suspected drug overdose.

1973—Billie Jean King beats Bobby Riggs in "The Battle of the Sexes," a televised tennis tournament watched by nearly 48 million people.

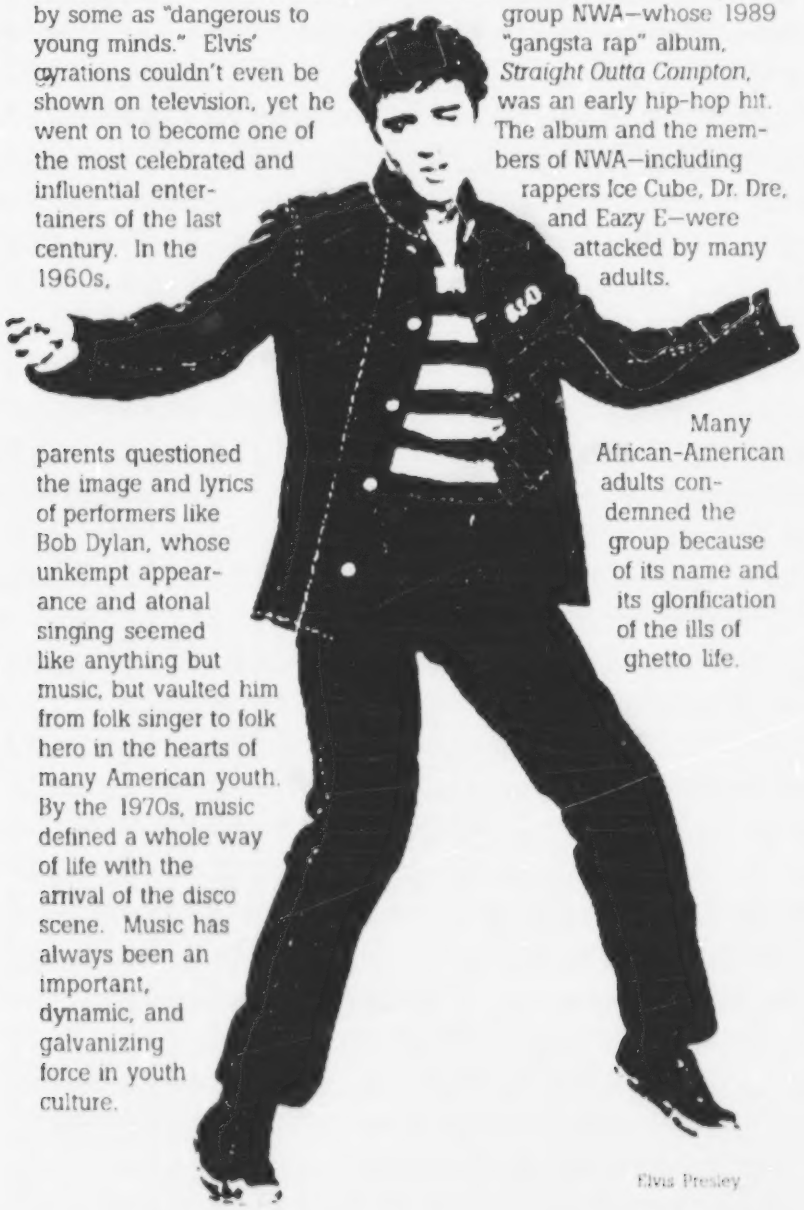
1973—The Supreme Court rules on Roe v. Wade and establishes a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion.

1973—The American Psychiatric Association rules that homosexuality is not a mental disorder.

1973—Maynard Jackson is elected first black mayor of Atlanta; Thomas Bradley becomes the first black mayor of Los Angeles; Coleman Young is named the first black mayor of Detroit.

The Power of Music

When rock and roll started in the 1950s, it was denounced by some as "dangerous to young minds." Elvis' gyrations couldn't even be shown on television, yet he went on to become one of the most celebrated and influential entertainers of the last century. In the 1960s, parents questioned the image and lyrics of performers like Bob Dylan, whose unkempt appearance and atonal singing seemed like anything but music, but vaulted him from folk singer to folk hero in the hearts of many American youth. By the 1970s, music defined a whole way of life with the arrival of the disco scene. Music has always been an important, dynamic, and galvanizing force in youth culture.



Elvis Presley

A contemporary example came with the success of the rap group NWA—whose 1989 "gangsta rap" album, *Straight Outta Compton*, was an early hip-hop hit. The album and the members of NWA—including rappers Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, and Eazy E—were attacked by many adults.

Many African-American adults condemned the group because of its name and its glorification of the ills of ghetto life.

Bob Dylan

Middle America was angered by the album's anti-police lyrics. In fact, it was the condemnation of the 200,000-member Fraternal Order of Police that brought NWA to national attention (and actually spurred sales among its youth audience). Nevertheless, teenagers loved them, making NWA the first supergroup of gangsta rap, putting the city of Compton, California, on the map, and taking the album to platinum status even though many radio stations refused to play the songs.

What many adults did not recognize was that controversy really wasn't a new phenomenon in the music world. Protests and references to drugs, sex, and other clandestine activities have always been imbedded in all kinds of music enjoyed by teenagers. In fact, a song about marijuana entitled *Reefer Man*, by Don Redman and His Orchestra, dates back to 1932. Rap, for example, borrowed or "sampled" old drug references

from songs popular in the 1960s and 1970s. These "samples" became parts of new hit songs.

Why is music so important, anyway? Think back. Although most people can't remember exactly what they learned in ninth grade math or English class, they can usually recall the tune and sing the words of a song popular back then. That's the power of music in our memories. While we may not recognize it, the repetition of words and phrases in music etches ideas in our minds. It happened to us when we were growing up and it's happening to young people today.

Repetition. It's why we had to memorize sentence structure and math formulas. And it's why commercials repeat their messages so often. Similarly, if a popular singer says smoke, drink, or have lots of sex, those messages stick and can create an environment where unhealthy behaviors like drug use are accepted without question. That's why adults should always do a reality check on the messages that kids hear on the radio and see in music videos.

Music is powerful and is a dominant force in youth culture.

Music is also a good mirror on what is going on in society at large. Rap was a wake-up call to the realities of urban poverty in the early 1980s as crack cocaine infiltrated urban neighborhoods. With drugs came increasingly violent gang activity, reflected in rap lyrics and the skyrocketing number of homicides among African American males. Popular rappers such as Eric "Easy E" Wright and Calvin Broadus (a.k.a. Snoop Doggy Dog) used their gang member status as a stamp of "authenticity" for their music.

The Beatles

March 1973—The last American combat soldiers leave South Vietnam, though military advisors and the Marines, who are protecting U.S. installations, remain. For the United States, the war is officially over. Of the more than 3 million Americans who have served in the war, almost 58,000 are dead, and over 1,000 are missing in action.

What's Hot in 1973—Bruce Lee starts a nationwide Kung Fu craze with *Enter the Dragon*. TV covers the Watergate hearings. The United States experiences the OPEC oil embargo. *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* is one of the top-rated sitcoms.

August 1974—Richard Nixon resigns as President.

1974—Atari develops the first play-at-home video game. Mood rings and VCRs also are new this year.

1975—*Saturday Night Live* debuts on television, starring John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Jane Curtin, Gilda Radner, and Chevy Chase.

January 1977—*Roots*, an epic about slavery, is watched by over 100 million Americans.

The 1990s saw a "Latin Explosion" with the rise in popularity of musical artists Selena, Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez, rapper Big Pun (the first Latino hip-hop artist to go platinum), and Ricky Martin. Martin's first self-titled English language CD sold 3.8 million units in 1999 and was the best album debut by a Hispanic artist in *Billboard* history. (*Billboard* is a leading trade magazine that tabulates music and video sales, video rentals, and radio play.) The rise in Latino music is indicative of increasing Latino influence as the number of Hispanics in the United States continues to grow.

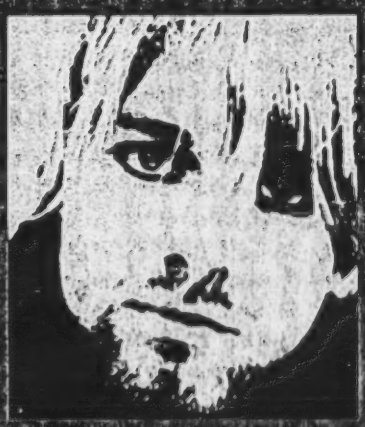
Selena

Many of the youth icons of yesterday and today came from the music world. Elvis. The Beatles. Michael Jackson. Madonna. Parents and other adults probably recognize names like Kurt Cobain (the 27-year-old lead singer/songwriter of the red-hot grunge band Nirvana who committed suicide in 1994) and Tupac Shakur (the 26-year-old rapper/actor who was killed in a still-unsolved ambush in Las Vegas in 1996). But it's a rare person over age 30 who can hum a tune or repeat the lyrics of a hit song written and performed by either of these legends of youth culture. And it's a rare teenager who isn't familiar with their music.

These late artists are icons to many of today's youth who identify with their songs, their artistry, and often their lifestyles. These lifestyles included drug use (Cobain nearly overdosed on heroin a week before committing sui-

Tupac Shakur

"It is one of the strangest of show business traditions—a young star dead far too soon, usually from drugs or violence. And devoted fans unwilling to let him go, decide the star must still be alive. There are people who swear that Elvis is still around, just waiting to make the greatest of all comebacks. Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors, has been dead almost 30 years, but don't tell that to a small cult of his followers. What's happening now with Tupac Shakur, the slain rap superstar, is part of all that. In his case, though, it may cut even deeper. His music provided a voice for a lot of people who don't feel anyone's listening to them. They call him their poet, even their prophet. And more than 2 years after his murder, some of them still don't want to let go." —Chris Wallace, *ABC Nightline*, February 2, 1999.


Kurt Cobain

"I have done many websites in the past but this has by far been the hardest to do. Even now, just thinking of Kurt saddens me, but I felt it necessary to share how I feel with others. During his life, he influenced pretty much everything I did, his attitude towards others was not that dissimilar to mine in a lot of respects and I've always hoped that one day I would see things the way he did, thus understanding his reasons behind taking his life that tragic day. Thank you for everything Kurt." —from the Kurt Cobain Internet Shrine, http://kurt-cobain.com/.

cide) and violence (Tupac Shakur served time for sexual assault and celebrated the "thug life," tattooing the phrase on his abdomen). Despite their controversial personas, or maybe because of them, they continue to exert great influence over their legions of young fans—much like youth icons of the past influenced earlier generations. Youth identify with their favorite celebrity icons and begin to regard the artists as peers who share their values, philosophies, music, style, mode of expression, and thus, culture.

Rapper Master P (Percy Miller) grew up in what he terms a "ghetto" in New Orleans, Louisiana. Relying mostly on word of mouth promotion and underground publicity, he started No Limit Records, a hip-hop record store that evolved into an independent rap label. He released his first solo album in 1991, *The Ghetto Is Tryin' to Kill Me*, which became an underground hit. He has created a business empire, churning out movies, producing rap albums for various artists he refers to as "soldiers," and maintaining his own performance career. He has also branched out into sports management and tried his hand as a professional basketball player. Earning $56.5 million in 1998, Master P ranked 11 on *Forbes* magazine's Celebrity 100 and 1 among hip-hop fans who admire his "do it yourself," entrepreneurial, rags-to-riches success story.

Marilyn Manson (the band and its lead singer share the same name) has a loyal following of young fans who view him as a crusader for free speech. Critics denounce the band's mock depictions of sex, drug use, and Satanism. But Manson's brand of "shock rock" metal, elaborate makeup, and special-effects stage shows struck a major chord with youth, and Manson has become a mainstream anti-hero. The band's 1996 breakthrough album, *Antichrist Superstar*, entered the American charts at No. 3, and their concert dates continue to sell out around the world.

August 16, 1977—Elvis Aaron Presley, the King of Rock and Roll, dies after an apparent heart attack at his Graceland Mansion home, where he was found unconscious in his night clothes and rushed to the hospital. His death was believed to be drug related.

1978—*Zoot Suit*, a play affirming Chicano identity, sets box-office records in Los Angeles.

What's Hot in 1978—Biorhythms, torn jeans, and hot tubs. Mickey Mouse turns 50. *Eight is Enough* is one of the top-rated TV shows. Popular songs: *Last Dance* and *My Way*.

1979—Sony introduces the Walkman, a personal, portable radio-cassette player.

1979—The sounds of disco, like Donna Summers' *Bad Girls* and *Y.M.C.A.* by the Village People, play long into the night at clubs like Studio 54. Meanwhile, there is a new urban sound being played by New York City musicians like the Sugar Hill Gang. In a few years, the music will be known as rap.

1979—Illicit drug use in the United States peaks. The number of users reaches 25.4 million, or 14.1 percent of the U.S. population. Sixty percent of high school students report having tried marijuana at least once.

Tune In

Young people have a lot of enthusiasm. That enthusiasm can be harnessed to develop resilience against alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. The same rap and alternative rock music that promotes negative behavior and substance abuse can be turned around to promote positive values. Youthful energy can be channeled in positive ways to fight back.

What can you do as a parent or concerned adult? Here are some suggestions.

1. **Don't try too hard to be young again.** You won't be believable. Speak to teenagers as an understanding parent—not as one of the gang.

2. **Don't attack everything in youth culture.** Find something that you like. For example, if a song has a positive anti-drug message but uses profanity, say good things about the message, without endorsing the cursing.

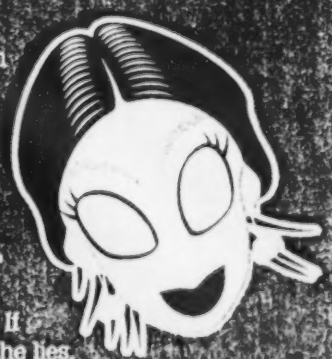
3. **Turnabout is fair play.** Be willing to listen to criticisms of your music and favorite movies if you are telling young people what you think of theirs. Discussing differences of opinion helps to bridge generational differences. Remember how **your** parents felt about your Little Richard records.

4. **Recognize that imagery means a lot to young people—even if the images are hard to take.** For young people, a ring in the nose or a small tattoo is often middle-of-the-road, so don't jump to conclusions based on looks alone.

5. **Don't oversell your point.** Youth audiences tend to be skeptical, and if you push too hard, you'll push them away.

6. **Ask others for help.** Young people are often more willing to listen to advice from their peers or from a trusted adult like a favorite aunt or the barber on the corner who knows all the latest haircuts.

7. **Tread carefully with humor.** What is funny to people of one generation often falls flat with those who are much younger or much older.



8. **Be careful of hurt feelings.** Young people can be very sensitive, even when they put forth an exterior that is rock hard. It's only a cover, remember?

9. **Correct the wrong stuff *immediately*.** If you don't set young people straight on the lies, myths, and half-truths about alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs in youth popular culture, they'll believe what they hear on the street and they won't know the truth.

Lauryn

Lauryn Hill is one of the most respected solo performers in the hip-hop community, breaking new ground with her personal, honest lyrics, positive messages, and strong vocals. In 1998, Hill released her solo debut, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, for which she wrote, arranged, and produced almost every track. In 1999, Hill received 11 Grammy Award nominations. She walked away with five awards, including Album of the Year and Best New Artist.

The rap-metal quintet Korn is one of the most popular new bands of the 1990s, building an underground fan base worldwide through touring and promotions instead of slick marketing campaigns. Young fans identify with Korn's themes of angst and alienation. In 1998, the group garnered massive publicity when a Michigan student who wore a Korn shirt to school was suspended because his principal believed Korn's lyrics were "obscene." The band responded by giving away free T-shirts outside the school. In 1999, the band caused a stir within the music industry by offering an MP3 of their single *Falling Away From Me* on their Web site. For each person who downloaded the song, the band donated 25 cents (up to $250,000) to the Childhelp USA and Children of the Night charities.

Bubble Gum Pop?

Some critics may call it saccharin, but sweetness sells in the millennial music business. Many of today's top teen acts all have "wholesome yet sexy" images, good looks, great dance moves, and catchy, feel-good tunes that make them bankable successes.

The Backstreet Boys (Nick Carter, Howie Dorough, Brian Littrell, Kevin Richardson, and A.J. McLean) are part of a new crop of American boy bands. Formed in Orlando, Florida, under the management of the boy band guru, Lou Pearlman, the Backstreet Boys blasted onto the scene with hits like *Everybody*. Their 1999 album, *Millennium*, made the record books, selling more than 1.1 million copies its first week out.

Another group formed under Lou Pearlman's tutelage is 'N Sync (Joshua "JC" Chasez, Justin Timberlake, Chris Kirkpatrick, Lance Bass, and Joey Fatone).

Fueled by the success of the hit single *Bye, Bye, Bye*, their *No Strings Attached* album sold almost 2.5 million copies its first week in stores, more than doubling the Backstreet Boys' first week sales record.

Teen queen Britney Spears (born in 1981) has roots in the Mickey Mouse Club, but she's now known as a dance-pop hit-maker. She became a certified teen sensation after the debut of her *Baby One More Time* video. Her debut album, *...Baby One More Time*, sold more than 12 million copies, and she was nominated for a Best New Artist Grammy in 1999. However, that Grammy went to 20-year-old Christina Aguilera, another pop songstress who garnered a loyal teen following with hits like *What a Girl Wants*. Close on their heels is 16-year-old Mandy Moore, who released her second album, *New*, in 2000.

Building Bridges

Remember, music is powerful and is a dominant force in youth culture.

Exercise 7:
Turn the Beat Around.

Take turns playing deejay the next time you and your teenager go for a ride in the car. You play the tapes or choose the radio station(s) on the way to someplace, and your teen gets to choose the music for the ride home. Did you both survive the rides?

January 11, 1979—The U.S. Surgeon General says smoking kills. Dr. Julius Richmond says "cigarette smoking is causally related to lung cancer in both men and women."

December 3, 1979—Eleven concertgoers are trampled to death in a rush for festival seating at The Who concert.

March 1981—John Hinckley, Jr. attempts to assassinate President Ronald Reagan outside the Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC, and manages to wound Reagan's press secretary, James Brady.

1981—Sandra Day O'Connor is the first woman ever appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

August 1, 1981—MTV is launched.

March 5, 1982—John Belushi dies from an overdose of cocaine and heroin.

What's Hot in 1983—Break dancing is the fad. Sally Ride is the first woman astronaut and Guion Bullford is the first black astronaut in space. Aspartame, a.k.a. Nutrasweet, is approved for soft drinks. Compact discs are made available. The first Cabbage Patch Kid dolls are sold. Jimmy Connors wins the U.S. Open tennis singles. *The Love Boat* is a top-rated TV show.

Reading Between the Lines
Media Literacy

Breaking it Down

Have you noticed changes in media images over the past few decades? Over the years, the definition of what is acceptable has changed. On one hand, important social issues are being given more attention; on the other hand, many television shows, movies, music, and other media have become more graphic.

Have you ever thought about the role that media play in shaping public perceptions? Have you talked to your teens about it? They face a barrage of messages from television shows and movies, video games, music, and the Internet—all packed with ideas about what it means to be young, how to handle interactions with others, how to have fun, and how to gain status as an adult. Yet, teens may not be as equipped as we are to critically examine the parts of the message—its meanings, intent, context, and impact. And, because of teens' extensive use of media and other technology, media have far-reaching potential to influence their values and culture—perhaps more than ever before.

Media literacy can help youth recognize and understand messages—subliminal or direct—delivered in song lyrics, television shows, movies, advertisements, or depicted on T-shirts and jewelry.

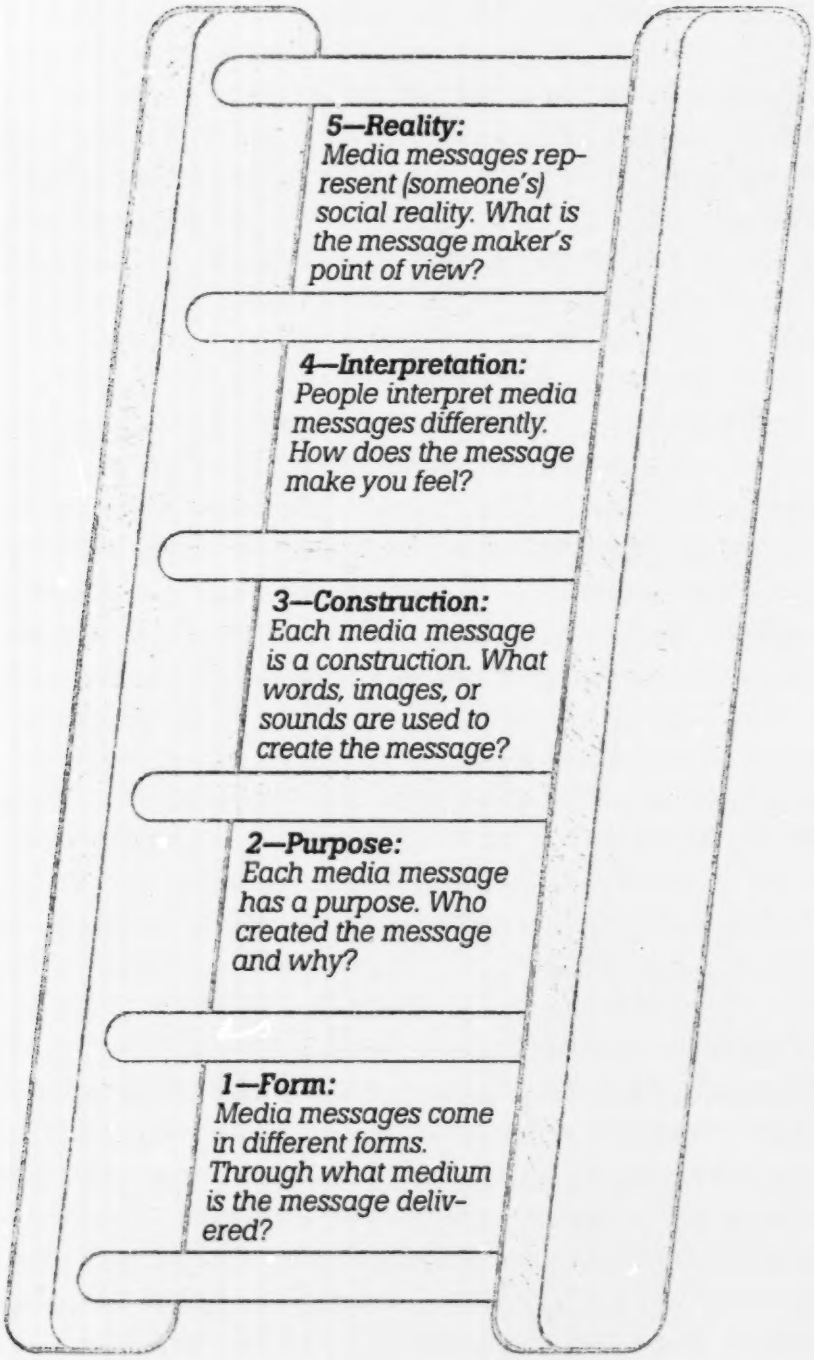
The influence of the media should not be underestimated. By mid-adolescence, teens have watched about 15,000 hours of television—more time than they spend with teachers in school. Add to that figure the hours devoted to surfing the Internet, playing video games, watching videos and DVDs, listening to the radio, and attending movies, and the media's impact becomes clear.

The Media Literacy Ladder

The media literacy ladder is a visual organizer to help teens identify, analyze, and evaluate media messages. The information presented in the ladder can empower your teen by helping her become a critical consumer of information. Each step on the ladder introduces teens to one of five basic principles of media education. Ask your teen to pick any media message—a movie, a magazine article, a TV or magazine advertisement, a T-shirt, or song lyrics. Next, starting at the bottom of the ladder and working to the top, ask your teen to answer the questions at each step on the ladder. The first two steps (identifying form and purpose) require your teen to identify details in the media message. For example, a TV news broadcast presents information differently than a billboard or a bumper sticker does. Those differences in form help shape not only what is said but also how it is said.

The top three steps encourage your teen to analyze information in the media message. In other words, she can make comparisons, link cause and effect, distinguish fact from opinion, and investigate bias and slant. In doing so, your teen may begin to understand how messages are constructed to shape meaning and how the construction process itself is shaped by assumptions about culture, gender, race, social class, and age.

Finally, when your teen has reached the top of the ladder, encourage him to evaluate the media message. That is, ask him to draw conclusions and form opinions about the media message. Is the message accurate and complete, or is important information missing from the message? You and your teen can "climb the ladder" together to discuss the latest movie, breaking headline, a favorite music video, hit song, or advertising campaign.


5—Reality:
Media messages represent (someone's) social reality. What is the message maker's point of view?
4—Interpretation:
People interpret media messages differently. How does the message make you feel?
3—Construction:
Each media message is a construction. What words, images, or sounds are used to create the message?
2—Purpose:
Each media message has a purpose. Who created the message and why?
1—Form:
Media messages come in different forms. Through what medium is the message delivered?

1984—Federal researchers announce that they've isolated the retrovirus that causes AIDS.

July 17, 1984—Congress raises the national drinking age to 21. The President signs a bill giving States until October 1 to raise their minimum drinking ages to 21 or face a 5 percent cut in Federal highway funds.

September 1984—The Huxtables of television's *The Cosby Show* become TV's most popular family ever.

1985—Rock Hudson acknowledges he has AIDS.

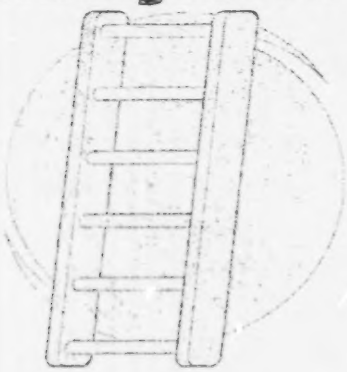
Mid-1980s—A crack cocaine epidemic spreads across the Nation. The use of crack becomes widespread, particularly within inner cities. Violent crime rates soar, fueled in large measure by the drug trade.

1985—Oprah Winfrey begins her talk show.

December 10, 1985—A complete ban on tobacco advertising is urged. The American Medical Association says cigarettes kill many people. The U.S. Surgeon General agrees, saying that cigarettes are a greater health risk than anything else in the workplace.

Literacy Ladder

Literacy Ladder



Climb the Ladder

You notice your teen singing along to a music video on TV. You could initiate a conversation that may go something like this (P is for parent and T is for teen):

P Wow, it looks like you are really into that. What are you watching?

T It's Lumpy Coal's latest music video. *(This is step one, identifying the message form.)*

P Who is Lumpy Coal? *(Step two: who created the message and why?)*

T They are a band, and they have a cool new song.

P What is the video about?

T It's about partying and having fun with your friends.

P Oh. How do they party in the video? *(Step three: what words, images, sounds are used to create the message?)*

T Ummm. It looks like they're drinking alcohol, dancing, and flirting a lot with some really good-looking people.

P Oh. It sounds like there's a lot going on in that video. Why do you think you like it so much? *(Step four: how does the message make you feel?)*

T I don't know. It's just fun and I like the song.

P Do you think that's really how most young people party, or is Lumpy Coal exaggerating the party scene a bit? *(Step five: what is the message maker's point of view?)*

T Well, I've never been to a party where everyone is so good looking. And there's usually no smoke-filled rooms like the one in the video.

P So why do you think those things are in Lumpy Coal's video?

T They have to make it look cool so people will be into it and buy their CD.

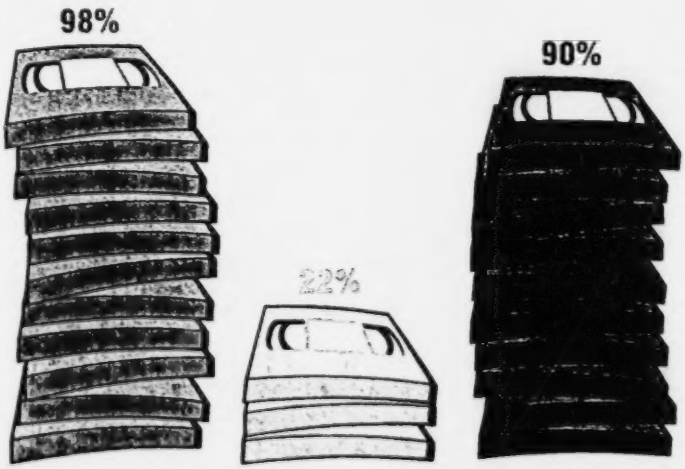
P So, is drinking alcohol and smoking cool? Is that what really happens when young people get together to have a good time?

T No, but they make it seem that way in the video.

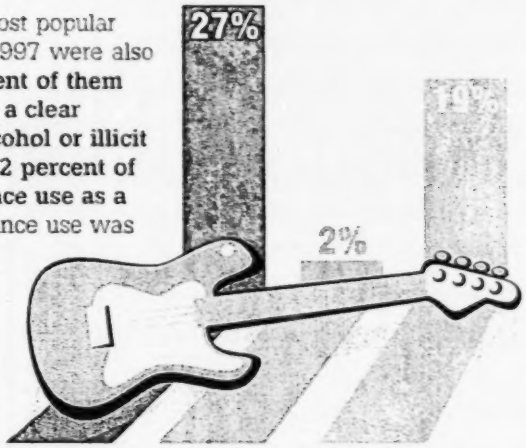
At this point, you can congratulate your teen for coming to this conclusion. You can use the opportunity to explain the basic fundamentals of media literacy and take a more academic approach to analyzing other media messages in the future.

Movies and Music

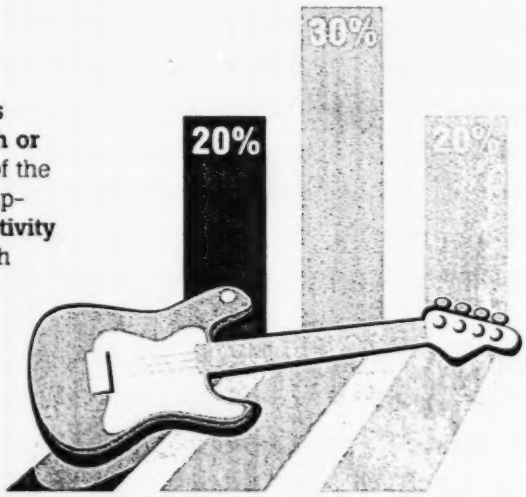
A recent study showed that almost all of the movies evaluated **(98 percent of the 200 most popular movie rentals of 1996 and 1997) depicted substance use. Illicit drugs appeared in 22 percent of the movies, and alcohol and tobacco appeared in more than 90 percent of the movies.** More than one-fourth of the movies that depicted illegal drugs contained graphic portrayals of drug preparation and/or ingestion.



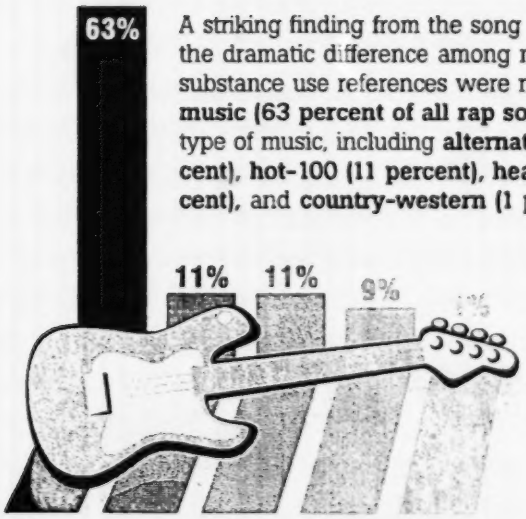
One thousand of the most popular songs from 1996 and 1997 were also assessed, and **27 percent of them were found to contain a clear reference to either alcohol or illicit drugs.** However, only **2 percent of the songs had substance use as a central theme.** Substance use was rarely associated with any motivations or consequences, and only **19 percent of songs mentioned any negative consequences from drugs.**



But illegal drug use **was associated with wealth or luxury in 20 percent** of the songs in which drugs appeared, with **sexual activity in 30 percent,** and with **crime or violence in 20 percent.**



A striking finding from the song analysis study was the dramatic difference among music categories—substance use references were more common in **rap music (63 percent of all rap songs)** than any other type of music, including **alternative rock (11 percent), hot-100 (11 percent), heavy metal (9 percent),** and **country-western (1 percent).**



January 1986—Americans watch in horror as the space shuttle Challenger explodes in a ball of flames 1 minute after liftoff. In addition to the astronaut crew, the civilian on board, school teacher Christa McAuliffe, is also killed.

June 19, 1986—Len Bias, basketball star, dies at 22 from a drug-induced heart attack. Bias dies after using cocaine to celebrate his lucrative contract with the Boston Celtics. This, and other similar events, caused management in professional sports to lay down tougher rules to prevent drug use by players.

October 11, 1987—The Names Project Foundation's AIDS Quilt is unfurled for the first time on the Mall in Washington, DC.

What's Hot in 1988—Safari jackets and ankle length skirts are fashion statements. Mac computer experiences the first computer virus. A bomb kills 259 people on Pan Am Flight 103 from Lockerbie, Scotland. Popular songs: *Don't Worry Be Happy* and *One Moment in Time*.

April 23, 1988—A ban on smoking on domestic airline flights takes effect.

1989—Hundreds of people are killed during a student uprising in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, when the Chinese army retaliates against their protest for democracy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Talk With Your Teen About Media Literacy

Give them credit. Approach the discussion believing that your teen has given some thought to the image on his own. Adolescents may give the impression that image is everything, but they do look for content. Teenagers believe that they are independent thinkers who can reach their own conclusions when presented with the facts.

Be open to learning something yourself. Remember that youth need to be involved in the discovery of information, not just presented with information.

Remain calm and openminded. We often are triggered to action by things that offend our own sensibilities of what is right, beautiful, and logical. If we act on instinct, the outcome is likely to be the opposite of what we intend.

Don't expect immediate results. If you have not been talking to your teen on a regular basis, she may be suspicious of this new media literacy information, measuring it against her "authenticity yardstick." Keep lines of communication open, even if the first session does not go so well. Allow some space for your teen to sort out ideas and images for herself.

Seize the moment. Incidental opportunities (such as your teen labeling a program "dumb" after viewing) that come up daily may be used to start enlightening discussions.

Talk back to your TV. When appropriate, express opinions about sexism, racism, and unnecessary violence. Challenge commercials and the way they try to sell not only products, but attitudes and lifestyles. And, don't forget to point out positive portrayals as well.

Insist that media literacy be taught in the schools. Providing media literacy in the home and the school reinforces what your teens are learning and gives them more opportunities to practice and perfect their skills.

By helping our teens become media literate, we can help protect them from pressures from advertising and other media forms to smoke, drink, use drugs, have sex, or eat unhealthy foods. We also can help them build communication skills, encourage them to consider multiple interpretations of media messages, put portrayals of themselves and others in perspective, and improve media use habits, such as changing ritualistic viewing behaviors. In addition, we can improve the media use habits of the entire family and promote more proactive behavior among all family members.

Media literacy is not media bashing; the goal is not to ridicule the media. Media are dominant forces in our culture and an important part of our teenagers' lives. It should be evaluated fairly, not denigrated. Media literacy is also no silver bullet or magic wand; it will not instantly solve all of our problems. But it is our best defense in resisting manipulation and keeping a perspective on the images and messages that are a part of media and youth culture.

As you employ these skills at home, remember that the heart of media literacy lies in the discussion. There are many activities that you can do with your children, but nothing is more important than talking with them about what we watch, hear, and read. Keep discussions relaxed; this takes the pressure off of teens to get the "right" answer. Draw out their ideas and guide them to critically examine what they see and hear. Remember to keep probing the answer as this helps young people expand their thoughts. This helps them focus and helps us understand how they perceive what they view. It doesn't matter so much what questions you ask; the important thing is to get youth to express and to challenge what they see and hear.

Young people can learn how to read between the lines so that they can understand exactly what music videos, movies, and other forms of communication that reach youth are saying to them.

Building Bridges

Remember, media play an important role in youth culture.

Exercise 8: Pass the Remote Control!

Watch each other's favorite television show together at least once sometime during the same week. Was the show any different than you thought it would be? Did you like it? Talk to each other about your impressions.

1989—In Germany, the wall separating democratic West Berlin from communist East Berlin is torn down by protestors, ushering in the uneasy rebirth of democracy in Eastern Europe.

January 18, 1990—Marion Barry, Mayor of Washington, DC, is arrested on charges of possession of crack cocaine.

January 1991—President George Bush declares war on Iraq and the Gulf War begins.

1992—The first racially-based riots in years erupt in Los Angeles and other cities after a jury acquits L.A. police officers in the videotaped beating of Rodney King.

1992—Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) is the first Mexican American woman and Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) is the first Puerto Rican woman elected to the House of Representatives.

April 8, 1994—Nirvana's Kurt Cobain is found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot to his head. At the time, his blood contained 1.52 milligrams of morphine, three times the lethal dose.

December 1994—Chris Mitchell, a Rockland County teenager, dies after being dropped on his head, in a mosh pit, at a Bronx club in New York.

It's an Ad, Ad, Ad, Ad World

It is particularly important to use media literacy skills to analyze advertising messages. The hunt for consumer dollars is on, and teens are a prime target. Many advertisers view teens as a uniquely profitable three-in-one market: as buyers themselves, as influencers of their parents' purchases, and as future adult consumers. America's 31 million teenagers spent $153 billion in 1999, according to the marketing firm Teenage Research Unlimited. The U.S. Census Bureau projects the number of teens to hit nearly 35 million by the year 2005, and experts expect their purchasing power will increase as well. Teens also have tremendous influence over their family's spending on everything from computer equipment and vacation destinations to fast-food and supermarket purchases. Manufacturers and retailers have taken notice. A variety of products—from soft drinks to athletic shoes to CDs—are marketed directly to teenagers and preteens. However, young people also see advertising for products that aren't for them, like cigarettes and alcohol—ads that can be pervasive and convincing.

Advertisements in magazines, on television, and in other media are the most carefully produced pieces of media ever created. For each page of advertising in a magazine or 30-second spot that comes on between television shows, months of planning and millions of dollars have been spent! After all, corporations use advertising to reach potential customers. And the strategy works—people buy the goods and services they see advertised—especially name brands.

While most ads are fairly easy to spot, sometimes it's not always clear that what is presented is really an ad. For example, how many times have you seen a specific product used in a movie? These "product placement" ads may be as subtle as a handsome actor

smoking a cigar in a movie scene or an attractive woman wearing a fur coat in a music video. Some of the most powerful advertisements are the ones that lead us to believe that "everyone is doing it"—whatever "it" is.

One style of marketing often used by companies for consumer products is popularity by association. That's why a musical artist or athlete promotes a product by wearing it rather than actually appearing in an advertisement. Sometimes the endorser is paid a fee and sometimes the trade-off is free stuff. It's a low-key sell, not a high-power one. This is a popular approach because young people tend to be suspicious. The use of celebrities to market products, services, or even good causes can be viewed cynically by young people who simply see it as someone "getting paid" to do a job and not someone who really believes in whatever is being promoted.

Some types of advertising include:

Traditional—The product or service is clearly identified, and a call to action is made (buy this product, use this service, call this telephone number).
Image—The company or organization seeks to be associated with a certain feeling, image, or cause. Products or services are not always featured in image advertising.
Product placement—A company pays for a product or message to be featured in an entertainment vehicle, such as a movie or music video.
Event sponsorship—A sponsor's name is displayed prominently at event venues, on ticket stubs, or other items associated with a special event.
Celebrity endorsement—A well-known person is paid to promote a product or service.

Building Bridges

Remember, advertising plays a major role in youth culture.

Exercise 9: Tuning In.

Trade copies of magazines you and your teen like to read and pick one advertisement* that catches your eye. Sit down together and ask each other the following questions:

1. **What product or lifestyle is the ad selling/promoting?**
2. **Why did the company pick this particular magazine to advertise its product? Who is the intended audience?**
3. **What does the company want you to think or believe about the product? What will using the product do for you?**
4. **Is there anything the company might not want you to know about the product? Are there any negatives or harms associated with using the product?**

*** After you each do this once, try it again with an alcohol or tobacco advertisement.**

1996—The Internet, gaining popularity, becomes a feature in coffee houses. People can "surf" the "Net" while socializing at these cyber cafes.

September 13, 1996—Tupac Shakur is shot by unknown gunmen and dies in Las Vegas, Nevada.

March 10, 1997—Notorious B.I.G. (a.k.a. Christopher Wallace, a.k.a. Biggie Smalls) is shot dead at the age of 24 in Los Angeles, California.

April 1997—Ellen DeGeneres "comes out" on her television show, *Ellen*.

April 13, 1997—Tiger Woods wins the 61st Masters Tournament and becomes the first black and youngest person to win the Masters.

December 1997—Comedian Chris Farley overdoses on cocaine and morphine.

1998—The Office of National Drug Control Policy launches its National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, a multidimensional effort designed to educate and empower youth to reject illicit drugs.

1999—About 9,000 people attend the fourth annual "Boardstock"—an end of summer party and professional wakeboarding competition in northern California.

Building Bridges

A Case Study

Bill is a recovering alcoholic and experimented with marijuana, LSD, and other drugs when he was in college. As the parent of a 13-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son, he was in a bind. On one hand, he wanted to have frank, open, and honest discussions with his children about drugs, but on the other hand, he was afraid his children might take his experiences to mean they could use drugs when they were young and still be happy, productive adults. He was also afraid of being cast as a hypocrite.

"My kids will be the first ones to call me on anything if I don't follow through. They know I expect them to be up-front and honest with me, and they expect the same in return. I've always told them smoking and using drugs were bad as they were growing up, but when they hit the teen years, you need to be more specific. You have to be able to counter all the pressures they face to use drugs."

Bill decided that avoiding the subject would not help his children and that they could benefit from his mistakes.

"It wasn't an easy conversation at first," says Bill. "But I made it clear that I did not want them to use alcohol, tobacco, or any other substances. I told them that I had made bad choices when I was younger, and told them how I am still paying for those choices today. I read up on some of the latest drugs and then told them about the very real dangers they faced if they used them—including what their mother and I would do if we ever found out!

"The fact that I have a pretty good relationship with my kids to begin with definitely made the discussion a lot easier. And, this is by no means a one-shot deal. There are probably a hundred opportunities each day to reinforce to them that they have better things to do than drugs. I plan to make the most of them."

In Conclusion

As you've seen throughout this guide, youth culture can have a powerful influence on youth attitudes and behaviors. But in spite of the worries we may have about the potential negative effects of pop culture and peer pressure, research shows that parents possess a unique power to help their children stay healthy and drug free. Parental influence is the primary reason that youth do not use drugs. Most teens who do not use alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs credit their parents for their decision. The fact is that despite your teen's growing independence, your parental guidance and support is needed now as much as ever.

But how do parents know the right things to say and do? Experts tell us that we have to take the time to understand the world teens live in today. By reading *RETROspective* and building bridges with your teen, you've taken a big step toward that understanding.

In addition, there are five basic things you can do to help ensure your teen makes healthy and informed decisions:

- **Establish and maintain good communication with your teen.**
- **Get involved in your teen's life.**
- **Make clear rules and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.**
- **Be a positive role model.**
- **Help your teen deal with the need for peer acceptance.**
- **Monitor your teen's activities.**

June 23, 2000—Seattle's Experience Music Project (EMP) opens. The guitar-shaped museum tells the story of the "creative, innovative, and rebellious expression that defines American popular music." Grand opening concerts feature Patti Smith, rappers Dr. Dre and Eminem, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Kid Rock, Rikki Lee Jones, and Joe Jackson.

January 2001— Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI) is the first quadriplegic to serve in the U.S. Congress. He uses a battery-powered wheelchair and voice-recognition software to dictate letters, legislation, and speeches on his computer. His special needs prompted the House of Representatives to install an accessible voting machine and podium.

To learn more, log on to an interactive version of *RETROspective* at www.health.org/reality/retro or check out these additional resources:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
1-800-729-6686, TDD 1-800-487-4889 or www.health.org (se habla español)

Office of National Drug Control Policy
1-800-788-2000 or www.theantidrug.com

Parenting IS Prevention Project
1-404-248-9676 or www.parentingisprevention.org

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
1-703-706-0560 or www.cadca.org

African American Parents for Drug Prevention
1-513-475-5359 or www.emory.edu/NFIA/about/partners/aapdp.html

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
1-213-625-5795 or www.napafasa.org

National Hispano/Latino Community Prevention Network
1-505-747-1889 or www.ndpl.org/nhlcpn.html

White Bison, Inc.
1-719-548-1000 or http://www.whitebison.org/

retro

a parent's guide to

youth culture

Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration

National Clearinghouse for
Alcohol and Drug Information

P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847-2345

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBIA, MD
PERMIT No. 259

CSAP Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 01-3417
Printed 2001

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").